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# News Release



<http://carlsbad.fws.gov>

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For Release:

## **CRITICAL HABITAT PROPOSED FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POPULATION OF MOUNTAIN YELLOW-LEGGED FROG**

Today the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a proposed rule to designate approximately 8,283 acres of streams in portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties as critical habitat for the federally endangered southern California population of mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*).

All of the areas proposed for critical habitat designation lie within the boundaries of the Angeles and San Bernardino National Forests. A small portion of the proposed areas – 119 acres - are privately owned lands.

Proposed critical habitat includes portions of Bear Gulch, Vincent Gulch, and Alder Gulch along the east fork of the San Gabriel River; and portions of Little Rock Creek, Big Rock Creek, and Devil's Canyon along the West Fork of the San Gabriel River; portions of the East and West Forks of City Creek; and portions of Fuller Mill Creek, Dark Canyon, Black Mountain Creek, and the North Fork of the San Jacinto River.

Some of the areas proposed for critical habitat designation are not currently known to contain populations of the species. These areas, including City Creek, and the upper reaches of the North Fork of the Whitewater River are being proposed for designation because the Service determined they contain features essential to the conservation of the species.

“The southern California population of mountain yellow-legged frog is extremely limited,” said Steve Thompson, Manager of the Service’s California/Nevada Operations. “Some unoccupied areas are being proposed for designation because they are essential for the conservation of the species and will likely be focal points for recovery efforts – this is especially true in the case of City Creek.”

Portions of Fuller Mill Creek, Dark Canyon, the North Fork of the San Jacinto River and Hall Canyon that fall within the boundaries of the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan are being excluded from proposed critical habitat.

Mountain yellow-legged frogs are found in streams from southern California to high-elevation lakes in

the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Research conducted on the various populations of the species indicates that mountain yellow-legged frogs in southern California are distinctly different from those found in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. In 2002, the Service listed mountain yellow-legged frogs in southern California as an endangered distinct population segment of the species.

This proposed rule was prepared pursuant to a court order resulting from a lawsuit filed against the Service by the Center for Biological Diversity in 2004, challenging our failure to designate critical habitat for the southern California DPS of mountain yellow-legged frog at the time it was listed under the ESA. The Service is preparing a draft economic analysis of the proposed critical habitat that will be released for public review and comment at a later date.

The Service is requesting comments and information on the critical habitat proposal be submitted in writing to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92011, or by facsimile to 760-431-9618. Comments may also be sent by electronic mail to [fwlcfwo\\_myllfpch@fws.gov](mailto:fwlcfwo_myllfpch@fws.gov). Comments will be accepted until November 14, 2005. Written requests for a public hearing will be accepted until October 28, 2005.

In 30 years of implementing the ESA, the Service has found that designation of critical habitat provides little additional protection for most listed species, while preventing the agency from using scarce conservation resources for activities with greater conservation benefits.

In almost all cases, recovery of listed species will come through voluntary cooperative partnerships, not regulatory measures such as critical habitat. Habitat is also protected through cooperative measures under the ESA, including Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe Harbor Agreements, Candidate Conservation Agreements and state programs. In addition, voluntary partnership programs such as the Service's Private Stewardship Grants and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program also restore habitat. Habitat for listed species is provided on many of the Service's National Wildlife Refuges, and state wildlife management areas.

A copy of the proposed rule and other information about the southern California population of mountain yellow-legged frog is available on the Internet at <http://carlsbad.fws.gov>, or by contacting the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office at 760-431-9440.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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